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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MONROVIA 000282

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STATE FOR AF/W-PDAVIS AND INR/AA-BGRAVES

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TAGS: [EAID](#) [PREL](#) [LI](#) [CH](#)

SUBJECT: LIBERIA: FEBRUARY 1 VISIT OF CHINESE PRESIDENT

REF: A. MONROVIA 00066

[1](#)B. 06 MONROVIA 1553

MONROVIA 00000282 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: AMBASSADOR DONALD E. BOOTH FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. Chinese President Hu Jintao visited Liberia for a one-day visit February 1. According to Chinese Embassy Political Counselor Gou Hao Dong, it was the first visit by a Chinese head of state to Liberia since the two countries first established diplomatic relations in 1977. Gou told Poloff February 26 that both the Liberian and Chinese governments were "satisfied" with the visit and that the Chinese Government is now sure that Liberia will not reconsider its one-China policy. Gou said China will provide the following to Liberia as a result of the visit: 1) US \$1 million for the Liberian Government to use at its discretion, 2) US \$10 million grant for rehabilitation of the University of Liberia's Fendell campus, 3) an anti-malaria treatment center for Monrovia's JFK Hospital, 4) three rural schools, 5) an increased number of scholarships for Liberian students, 6) cancellation of Liberia's matured debt up to 2005 (US \$11 million). Gou told Poloff the Chinese Government will also establish a cultural center in Liberia. Most of these deliverables had already been announced after President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's November 2006 visit to China. Deputy Minister of Foreign Relations for International Cooperation Conmany Wesseh told Poloff February 2 that the Liberian Government wants to see its friendship with China increase and encouraged the U.S. to work with the Chinese Government in Liberia. End Summary.

First Visit by Chinese Head of State

[1](#)2. (SBU) Chinese President Hu Jintao visited Monrovia, Liberia for a one-day visit February 1. The visit was filled with pomp and circumstance with Chinese and Liberian flags decorating Monrovia's streets and a state dinner hosted by President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. Chinese Embassy Political Counselor Gou Hao Dong noted to Poloff February 26 that it was the first visit of a Chinese head of state to Liberia since diplomatic relations were established for the first time between the two countries in 1977. Gou told Poloff that Liberia was added to President Hu Jintao's February tour of Africa after the Liberian President invited him to visit during her November state visit to China followed by her attendance at the China-Africa Cooperation Forum (see Reftel B). Gou said the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) provided logistical assistance to the Chinese Embassy for the

visit and expressed appreciation that the U.S-trained Armed Forces of Liberia band was available to play at ceremonies during the visit.

13. (SBU) Gou described the visit as "significant" and said both the Liberian and Chinese governments were "satisfied" with it and are committed to strengthening their bilateral relationship. Gou said the Chinese-Liberian bilateral relationship has had its "ups and downs", but the Chinese Government is sure that after President Hu Jintao's visit Liberia will not reconsider its one-China policy. Gou said the Chinese Government was very concerned about security during the visit. (FYI - In April 2006, former Speaker of the House of Representatives Edwin Snowe wrote a letter to Taiwan's diplomatic mission in the Gambia proposing strengthening of relations between Liberia and Taiwan. He was criticized by his legislative colleagues and the executive and apologized for his action in July 2006. End FYI.)

Deliverables

14. (SBU) The Chinese Political Counselor told Poloff that several agreements were entered into between Liberia and China during President Hu Jintao's visit. Gou stated that China will provide US \$1 million in cash to the Liberian Government, which the Liberian Government will be free to spend as it deems most appropriate. He said China will also provide a US \$10 million grant for rehabilitation of the University of Liberia Fendell campus, which will be used for faculty housing and fencing. (FYI - USAID is also providing complementary funding for the rehabilitation of classrooms at the Fendell campus.) Gou told Poloff China will set up an anti-malaria treatment center in Monrovia's JFK Hospital, one of fifteen that will be set up in Africa. He noted that,

MONROVIA 00000282 002.2 OF 002

while Presidents Johnson Sirleaf and Hu Jintao unveiled the center February 1, it will not be up and running for another two or three months. Gou said China will provide anti-malarial medicine and technology and will bring Chinese physicians to train and work with Liberian medical staff and eventually turn over the running of the center to these trained Liberians. Gou said the Chinese Government will build 3 schools in rural Liberia as part of 50 such schools to be built in Africa. He noted that China is working with the Liberian Government to identify the sites for the schools. Gou said that cultural exchanges will be strengthened and that a "Confucius Center" will be opened in Liberia. Gou said that such centers, which China is setting up throughout the world and already exist in Egypt and Benin, provide Chinese language instruction and sponsor cultural performances and exchanges. Gou said the Chinese Government has agreed to increase the number of scholarships provided to Liberian students to study in China. He said the majority of Liberian scholarship recipients to date have studied "practical" subjects such as rice production, computers, short-term medical training, and accounting. Gou stated that China has agreed to cancel Liberia's matured debt up to the end of 2005, which amounts to US \$11 million.

15. (C) Gou said more Chinese government officials are likely to visit Liberia, although no such visits are planned at this time. He said a Ministerial visit is likely upon completion of Monrovia's Samuel K. Doe Sports Stadium, which is being rehabilitated by the Chinese Government. Gou told Poloff that the building housing the Chinese Embassy in Monrovia, for which the Chinese Government pays a monthly rent of US \$8,000, is owned by a daughter of former President Charles Taylor and that the Chinese Government is concerned that their rent is being used to benefit him.

16. (C) Deputy Minister of Foreign Relations for International Cooperation and Economic Integration Conmany Wesseh told Poloff February 2 that the Liberia Government wants to see

its friendship with China increase in order to consolidate peace in Liberia and the region and that Liberia accomplished what it wanted from the visit of President Hu Jintao. Wesseh encouraged the U.S. to work with the Chinese Government in Liberia. Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for African and Asian Affairs, Henry Fahnbulleh, told Poloff January 29 that the Liberian Government wants to attract Chinese foreign investment. He said President Johnson Sirleaf has stated that Liberia "does not need handouts" because they are only short-term investments, but rather should seek long-term investments from partners.

17. (C) Comment. Hu Jintao's visit was heavy on ceremony, but thin on substance. Most of the visit's deliverables, including the University of Liberia rehabilitation grant, the building of rural schools, the increase in scholarships for Liberian students, and the cancellation of Liberia's matured debt up to the end of 2005, had already been announced after President Johnson Sirleaf's November visit to China (see Reftel B). Perhaps most significant is the fact that this is probably the death-knell for any GOL flirtation with recognizing Taiwan again. End Comment.

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